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## BOOK REVIEWS

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*English Literary Criticism.* With an Introduction by C. E. VAUGHAN. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896.

THE large number of persons interested in the academic study of criticism in this country will be interested in the slightly temerarious effort to supply in a compass of 220 pages an adequate historical sketch of English critical methods, together with specimens of criticism for the whole period. The man selected by Dr. Herford to write such a volume for the Warwick library is Mr. C. E. Vaughan. The choice was happy; the writer has shown in the execution of his task competent knowledge, power of compression, and freedom from critical vagaries. There is no other historical sketch equally good.

Mr. Vaughan rightly makes but three periods of English criticism—that of the Elizabethans and Milton, that from the Restoration to the French Revolution, and that from the Revolution to the present day. He does not make the mistake of dividing the second period. He sees with acuteness the unformed but significant character of Elizabethan criticism, which, in spite of its vague theorizing and its blind squabbles over technic, had a way of “sudden transition from questions of form to the deepest problems suggested by imaginative art.” Coming to Dryden he recognizes the prophetic import of the comparative method and historical spirit of *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. Mr. Vaughan gets over the age of correctness with a little too much assurance. Here, if anywhere, his catholicity seems to shrink, and his excusable lack of sympathy makes him a little summary with the Johnsonian respect for rules. He applies the same kind of severity to Johnson that he later applies to the irresponsible high-handedness of the *Quarterly*. Reaching Hazlitt and Coleridge, Mr. Vaughan points out the change of spirit. The standard of excellence is no longer to be found either in the individual judgment or in the codes inherited from older critics, but in the nature of literature—“of poetry as written large in the common instincts of all men no less than in the particular achievements of exceptional artists.” Mr.

Vaughan seems not fully to appreciate the significance of Coleridge, whom he neglects for Hazlitt. There is not much, however, in English criticism since Coleridge that is not germinally in Coleridge. He seems to us incomparably more potent historically than the brilliant but somewhat empirical, the often warped and didactic Hazlitt. Mr. Vaughan's moderate estimate of Coleridge may be due in part to his extraordinary admiration for Carlyle. He seems unaware that anything in the latter writer is anticipated by the former. From the men of our day the editor singles out the late Mr. Pater, "who, in the opinion of many, is the most remarkable of all English critics." No one would deny Mr. Pater's weight as a representative of the school which looks to the correlation of the critical terms and methods of the kindred arts. But there will be a large body of persons who will deplore Mr. Vaughan's neglect of Arnold for Pater. Arnold's body of work is larger by far than Pater's, and has been immensely more influential. If Pater gave us, in Carlyle's phrase applied to Goethe, something of "the very poetry of criticism," surely Arnold gave us the very ethics of criticism; if Pater gave literary critics a lesson by his interpretation of Sandro Botticelli, surely Arnold taught them as high a lesson of method by his interpretation of Isaiah, of Homer, of Dante.

Reverting to Mr. Vaughan's treatment of Johnson, we find it bitter against the great doctor's devotion to "the indispensable rules of Aristotelian criticism;" and Johnson is declared to be narrow, mechanical, and hostile to originality beyond any man who has achieved the dictatorship of English letters. Something may be said in qualification of Johnson's narrowness and devotion to rules. Mr. Vaughan seems to forget that Johnson draws sharply the distinction between what is established because right, and what is right because established (*Rambler*, 170); and that, furthermore, he occasionally breaks away definitely from Aristotelian notions (*Rambler*, 156). Mr. Vaughan does not seem to remember that in various places, again, Johnson gives some theoretical allegiance to historical methods. Our author, once more, assigns to Goldsmith credit for the first recognition of a poet's need of studying the public. But frequently Johnson had said with epigrammatic force that popular judgment is a sound court of appeal (*Rambler*, 23, *Lives of Poets*, p. 300, ed. Arnold, Hill's *Boswell*, I, 200). Of course Johnson was often narrow, and often harsh. But he was too great a man to be always small in criticism. The mere fact that Johnson anticipated

Mr. Vaughan completely in praising Dryden for his open-mindedness should have secured more of his present interpreter's appreciation.

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*The United States of America*, Cambridge Historical Series. By EDWARD CHANNING, PH.D., Assistant Professor of History in Harvard University. Macmillan & Co., 66 Fifth avenue. Price \$1.50.

PROFESSOR CHANNING says in his prefatory note, "The aim of this little book is to trace the steps by which the American people and its peculiar type of federal state have developed out of such heterogeneous and unpromising materials for nation building as were to be found in the English-American colonies in 1760. Less attention has been given to campaigns and battles than is usual in works of this class, and the space thus gained has been devoted to the elucidation of the deeper causes underlying the American Revolution, and to a detailed account of the period between the close of the Revolutionary War and the inauguration of President Madison."

Comparatively few of our American historians have set before themselves so serious a purpose as this, while by far the larger number have been content to be little more than mere chroniclers of the events which have made up the outward life of the nation.

It is probably true that the American people are more deeply interested today than ever before in the great movements which have molded our government and determined the constitution of our society, and a work which will seriously and thoughtfully discuss them within a compass sufficiently limited to make it accessible to the general reader will be welcomed.

While the scope of Dr. Channing's work is confined to the limits of a manual it is evident that he has not been contented with a partial investigation of the facts, but that he has drawn from all available sources materials for a thorough if not exhaustive discussion of each subject. The growth and development of the policies which have made up our national life have never been treated more candidly, clearly or concisely. It is hard for an American citizen to write an impartial history of his own country. Our national life is comparatively of so recent origin that we have not yet escaped entirely from the pas-